553 event associated with it. We shall classify children under two headings: 1) ordinary children; 2) children especially sought.

The second category refers to children born after their parents have consulted the soothsayers, given alms and sacrifices, or employed other magical procedures.

Since the ordinary child is regarded as a spontaneous gift of God, his name is given by the father's close relatives unless some recent or remote event requires a name having particular significance.

551 Some examples of common ordinary names are Bila and Poko.

Names having special meanings are illustrated by the following examples.

Passektale (from passek, "insufficient," and talé, "resentment, hatred") means "I do not know what has caused the hatred which is felt for me."

Paratsida (from paraté, "to be unwilling," and sida, "truth") means "enemy of truth," a name intimating that people dislike the truth.

Dimpougoubnoma (literally, dima, "great chief, king"; pougbo, "to follow"; and noma, "profitable, good") is a name given to a child born of a mother given by a chief or one whose father has been given some important gift by a chief just before the child's birth.

842 [192] If a woman has no children after several years, the husband consults the soothsayers, makes offerings and sacrifices, employs
782 charms, and finally resorts to the tinsé ([sing.] tinkougri, from tinga, "earth," and kougri, "stone") or to the tiga (fetish tree). The woman goes with her husband to the possessor of the god. They take a rooster and some cowries. After they explain the object of their visit, the rooster is killed by the priest, and if the offering is accepted, the couple is dismissed with a formal promise that their prayers will be answered.

553 If, in due course, the wife is delivered of a child, the baby must be named Tinga, and his brothers and sisters will be named Timbila, Timpoko, etc., or if the tiga was appealed to, the baby must be called Tiga, and his siblings, Tibila, Tipoko, etc.

715 It also happens that after successive births, the babies die. Since
553 the Mossi, as we have noted, believe in reincarnation, they assume --

775 553 that the same baby is returning. So, in order to induce him to remain on earth, they give him a significant name.

One of these is Yewayan (literally, "one who has returned"), meaning "Here he is, back again; it is he once more, and we recognize him."

The same name is used for all members of the same family.

304 Scars. When a child is a year or two old, the family calls in an old woman who draws more or less straight lines on his face (cheeks, chin, forehead, even the nose) with a razor. These marks vary according to region and are not [193] the same, for example, at Kaya as at Ouagadougou.

The design used most often, however, has three straight lines from forehead to chin and one or two horizontal lines running across the nose and joining the vertical lines on the cheeks.

853 782 Feeding. If a mother does not have enough milk, she goes very early in the morning to a tree, for example, the kamsaongo or wédega (of the family of gohine lianas), to ask for milk. She falls to her knees, and believing that she is addressing a living person, she makes her request humbly, but with what faith! It appears that the prayer is often granted, but the woman must never again go under the tree or she will lose her milk.

853 604 The question of choosing a nurse does not arise in Mossi country unless the mother dies. In that case, the little orphan is entrusted to a sister of the child's father. If she has been a mother, she too goes to the tree to ask for milk, as described above, even if her most recent delivery occurred years before. Finally, if the child thus nursed is a girl and survives, she becomes the property of her father's sister who will give her in marriage, later on, to the suitor of her choice.

III. Death

764 554 The importance of funeral ceremonies depends on the age and rank of the deceased.

Nitiema (aged persons). Upon the death of an [194] old man or woman, all the relatives who live in the village are assembled.

792 to divine Providence. These are the mystics.

●775 However, the deism of either type is not very deep. All believe that a dead person will rejoin his ancestors and dwell eternally with them. They imagine, however, that "the road to Eternity is hard and the Kingdom of God so remote from the earth that they give cowries to their dead to pay their way through difficulties, the hazards of the journey being directly related to the good or bad actions of the deceased."

This may be said to be a kind of vague notion of a hell or a purgatory. However, this hell is neither the "everlasting fire of the Christians nor the horrible sufferings of the Moslems," since the person is supposed to be with his relatives.

The Alkyoamé. One sometimes hears a Moaga say: "I cannot avenge what you have done to me, but it will be settled on the day of alkyoamé." This is a somewhat superficial notion of a Day of Judgment. The Moaga does not really believe in a final judgment any more than he believes in the end of the world or the resurrection of the body. By the words alkyoamé daré, he alludes to the day when he and his enemy will both die and God will subject one of them to a punishment -- understood to be temporary -- for the harm he has done the other. [200]

Beliefs and Superstitions Concerning the Soul After Death

774 What do the Mossi believe the human being to be? Man is composed of three elements: the visible body, the siga or toulé (soul), and the kima (ghost).

The siga, which may be called the soul, is the part of the man which is to return to God.

Siga. According to the Mossi, the siga or toulé is easily frightened. A great sorrow, illness, or the death of a loved one can cause it to abandon the body temporarily. It then assumes a human appearance and can be seen by the person himself or by others. In that case, charms or fetishes are used to make it return.

774 761 Its temporary absence from the body is not thought to have any serious consequences since this does not disturb the normal functions of the human organism, but, since body and soul cannot

714 761 live without each other, its prolonged absence is thought to cause death.

714 763 Kima (from ki, "to die"). This is a sort of silhouette of a person who is about to die. It is visible only to certain initiates. It is said, however, to be somewhat deformed, and its presence may make one's hair stand on end or cause shivers that paralyze the legs and make walking impossible.

715 The siga may be distinguished from the kima in that the latter, being already dead, has its head completely shaved, wears ashes in the form of [201] a cross or X on its forehead, or has its feet stained with blood.

As soon as the person dies, his kima roams around the house for a time and then joins his ancestors at Pilimpikou.

715 718 Pilimpikou. Pilimpikou is a village belonging to the administrative district of Koudougou (upper Volta). On a mountain nearby, there is a grotto which is regarded as the sacred place where the kimsé of all the dead Mossi assemble.

Legend has it that any deceased relative may be found again at Pilimpikou if one were so unfortunate as not to have been present during his last moments. One can also go there to find out where the deceased has hidden part of his fortune or some valuable object.

It is said that one has only to go to the Tingsoba of Pilimpikou and ask him to use his influence to call the deceased.

The Tingsoba orders the petitioner not to shed a single tear at the sight of the "ghost," and, the legend goes on to say, if the secret of the interview with the kima is not kept, the person will die within the year.

Finally, it is believed that when the kimsé welcome new members -- they represent the whole family of all the dead Mossi for countless generations -- they organize games whose echoes are heard by the inhabitants of Pilimpikou.

715 Young people of both sexes who were unmarried at the time of their death and newborn children who have died [202] return to that place where they dwelt before coming into the world in order to "return to human form in the womb of another woman or of their former mother." As we noted in ān earlier paragraph, the Mossi believe in reincarnation. [203]

535 with metal and worn around the hips, distinguishes this costume
764 from others. The movements of the fringe follow the movements of the body. It soon is revolving so rapidly that it looks like a top.

Many people, however, do not own the special costume just described, and they merely tie a blanket around their loins. During the movements of the dance, this produces a very comical effect since it looks like the wagging tail of a monkey.

[534] The musical instruments which accompany this dance are long tom-toms (gangando); some of them are narrower at the middle and look like long, thin spools for thread.

The dancers also accompany themselves with tiny metal instruments which are like Spanish castanets.

The dance itself is performed in a circle under the direction of the chief of the warba whose costume is [239] richer than the others. All of the dancers usually wear many charms on their
[789] heads (tail of an ox and heads of birds stained with the blood of sacrificed chickens).

The warba proves that the Mossi believe in the immortality of
[775] the soul. They believe that the dance is necessary to enable the soul of the departed to join the souls of his ancestors. They hope in this way to earn the good favor of the new spirit.

Thus, this dance has a moral basis. However, it seems that the same cannot be said for the other dances which are performed so widely today.

535 In addition to these three national Mossi dances, there are some other dances performed only by women and girls which are actually exercises in physical culture rather than true dances. We shall speak only of the principal one, the kiguibtobo ("dance of the bumping buttocks").

The kiguibtobo. This dance is performed by a group of women, usually at the beginning of cool weather after the harvests are in. The dancers clap their hands while singers raise their melodious voices. The dance is rhythmic. Two dancers leave the group and take their places in the center of the circle. They go back and forth, and then suddenly at a given point in the song [240] they turn back to back so that their buttocks touch and bump each other in time to the music. The dancers must be equally strong

304 The Nioniossé and the Soukoaba do not practice circumcision,
184 and that is why they are called Mossé. In villages inhabited solely by Nioniossé, a kéogo may not be set up. At present some boys of Nionioga origin ignore the prohibition and go to their mother's village (Yastenga) to have the purifying operation (1).

[775]

1. Apparently the Moslems believe that those who are circumcised will not go to hell.

304 Among the Mossi many Christians voluntarily have themselves
832 circumcised; women -- even Christians -- feel a certain repug-
626 nance for the touch of the "Moaga."

Finally, excision is also esteemed among the Mossi, except among the Nioniossé who do not practice it. Girls who are not excised are scorned by their friends and will have no lovers.

766 The death of a naba, as we mentioned earlier, is carefully concealed; the more powerful he was, the more careful the concealment.
579 This is done out of fear of the disturbances which would be created by those who aspire to his succession, or by scoundrels who might take advantage of the absence of authority to indulge in every kind of robbery. At the death of the Moro Naba his province was sacked by armed bands, and no one dared to go out unarmed. On the day following the death of Moro Naba Sigri, we had to fetch millet from a village located a few kilometers from Ouagadougou. All the bearers were armed with bows, arrows, and spears. They made an interesting picture in the moonlight.

766 In spite of all their amulets and all their sacrifices, nabas die just like their subjects, and when this happens, his relatives hastily dig a pit in the entrance hut of the soukala and lay the corpse there without any ceremonies. Those wishing to see the naba will be told that he is unwell. The naba of Koupéla is especially favored in this respect. One of the huts in his soukala, standing near the entrance, is set aside for his burial. A pit has been dug within the hut, and every /72/ day the caretaker comes to pour dolo into the hole. This caretaker must not have a wife, and if he happens to have one before his appointment to this post, the naba takes her for himself. On the other hand, the caretaker eats the same food as the naba and drinks the same millet beer. Needless to say, this job is not in great demand. The
[761] naba may not enter the hut, and when the roof is in need of repair, the drummers are sent for, and the naba must flee; woe to him if he should hear the sound of the drums, for he would die within the year. When the naba of Koupéla dies, his hands and feet are immediately pierced with big thorns so that he may not return; should he venture to seize one of his people after his death, the thorns would cause him such pain that he would immediately let go of his prey. The corpse is tossed into the pit to fall as it may. The Mossi, full of respect for their chiefs when they are alive, make up for it when they are dead.

Young unmarried men or girls are buried with a previously deceased old woman of the family, so that someone will take care of them in the other life. Their death is regarded as a true misfortune and mourned accordingly. There are no dances or ceremonies. The father, mother, and younger siblings shave their heads on the second or third day after the burial.

[775] A small child is buried by the path. He will soon return in the person of the first child borne by his mother after his death.

776 tangandé in every detail either, for only the village may have a tangandé, and there does not seem to be any magic pact unless the sacrifices offered are considered as such a pact, which does not seem justified. The tangandé-animal is never sacrificed, and no special initiation takes place.

774 761 [775] The closest thing to totemism among the Mossi seems to be their concept of the human soul, and yet it is not, properly speaking, a totem in the sense indicated by these authors. Every man has a soul that lives on after death and takes the name of kyma, while during life it is called siga. Shortly before death it takes the name of toullé [197] /85/ in Ouagadougou or toundo in Koupela, but siga, toundo, kyma are one and the same thing, one and the same principle. According to the Mossi, this soul is an animal, invisible of course, a snake, a crocodile, a deer, a hare. The soul is related to this animal, it belongs to the same family, so that to kill a snake or a crocodile in a village where the soul of the inhabitants is a snake or a crocodile is to kill an inhabitant of the village; every individual related to the snake has a snake in the village to represent thim, and he will die when his soul-animal dies.

774 784 Yet, and this runs counter to the definitions of totemism, the individual expects no aid from this animal, never sacrifices to it, and never kills it himself to renew the kinship pact. A person whose soul is a crocodile is forbidden to kill crocodiles in his own village, but he may kill them elsewhere, although he may never eat them, while he may kill the tangandé animal as long as he does so outside the tangandé, and he may eat it at any time. Some people, when they [766] find a dead soul-animal of their family near their village, render it funeral honors, weep, wail, and bury it as one of their own, but they offer it no gifts and hold no koureé. Generally it is merely covered with earth. The most widespread soul-animals are a kind of snake (bosombodro) and the crocodile. Several families may have the same [582] one, and marriage, although exogamic, is not forbidden between members of these families.

774 754 The soul may leave the body and in fact leaves it often, especially during the night. If children had a good time in a certain place, if they enjoyed themselves at someone's house, the soul returns there at night. This is when the worst is to be feared from the sorcerers; they may seize the soul by surprise, and its unfortunate owner will die.

774 In the course of a dream, the soul may warn its owner of a threaten-
828 ing danger. One day a native, whose village and name were told to
761 me, dreamed that his enemy offered him a kola nut. Much anxiety ensued, for this is a sign used by the soul to indicate that an enemy threatens one with death. In such a case there is only one remedy, to deposit a few cowries on a nest of large red ants, so they will avert the disaster. The man set out immediately for the nearest ant nest. Alas, a snake bit him along the way, and he died before he could offer his gift to the ants! Such occurrences obviously make a profound imprint on the imagination of the natives, who immediately react with the sophism: post hoc, propter hoc. A few such cases are sufficient to anchor them forever in their superstitions, and innumerable such occurrences were related to me.

774 If the soul can leave the body, it is possible to seize it and to pre-
761 vent it from re-entering its body, and this is why our Blacks do not like to be photographed. They say that there is an evil spirit in the box, who takes the soul and eats it. This is proved by the fact that the individual may later be seen on the piece of paper.

774 One becomes sick when his soul cannot re-enter the body because
753 it is held prisoner by an evil sorcerer or by a kikiriga, and many sacrifices must be offered to obtain its release /86/ and return. Entreaties are usually directed to the tangandé in such cases, because it is stronger than all the other spirits, stronger even than the sorcerers, and because its function is to protect the village.

774 Sometimes the soul was so well hidden that the tangandé cannot
761 find it: the sorcerer has eaten it right away, or the tangandé itself
754 is in collusion; or the ancestral spirits are calling the sick person; or,
775 finally, it is God who sent the disease. Nothing can be done, and the person dies. His soul changes names, and henceforth is called kyma. It leaves the body at the moment of death. If it was taken by a sorcerer or by the ancestral spirits, at the moment of death it leaves the sacred grove where it was held captive. It proceeds to the place of souls from where it will return to the grave whenever sacrifices are offered to it. It will also return if it wishes to afflict the survivors with a disease of some sort.

775 Is the soul punished for the evil it has done on earth and rewarded
735 for the good? Opinions on the subject differ. Some say that when one gives alms to the poor, and the Mossi frequently do, when one is generous and hospitable, God takes all that has been given and sets

775 it aside to return it to the soul when it leaves the body. From this
[735] comes the thank-you wish, "May God repay you!" If the deceased led an evil life, if he was quarrelsome or a thief, if he killed, he is condemned to walk over live coals to reach God, or if he is a murderer, he may come to God only after he has drunk all the blood he has shed, which God has saved for this purpose. The major offenders are detained by the treetops and never reach the place of souls. It must be said, however, that most Mossi take little heed of the penalties which may await them in the other life or deny their existence altogether.

The souls go to Bourtenga, the "gathering place of the souls," according to the etymology of the word, a place of indeterminate geographical location, or they go to Pilimpikou, a mountain located
775 in Kipirsi country. Their sole occupation over there is to go to market
764 at night, and this is why on the day of burial the deceased is given cowries so that he may buy millet beer and clothes in order not to look like a tramp.

The souls are white but otherwise they look like men, although they are nimbler and can move effortlessly and with great rapidity
[264] from one place to another. They do everything upside down; they eat with the left hand and do with it all the things we do with the right, and this is why the corpse is washed with the left hand. They wear their clothes inside out, with the pocket of the breechcloth facing in; they carry the spears iron downward, and they walk backwards because their eyes are placed behind their head. This is why the kourita who represents the deceased wears everything inside out.

775 The souls of the animals sacrificed to him, chickens, sheep, goats,
769 beeves, etc., go to join the deceased, who can thus feast, invite friends, and gather kin together, for people are reunited up there. Although nabas are no longer such, those who were subject to them on earth recreate their court. It is said that parents come to fetch their children, /87/ nabas their pages and favorite wives, and friends their friends, unless the survivors treat them very well and provide them with lots of food.

Indeed, the souls of the dead come back to earth to receive the gifts which are offered to them, to drink the blood of the victims sacrificed in their honor and the millet beer prepared for them on the annual Day of the Dead (basra). This is why no Mossi faithful to tradition ever drinks millet beer without first pouring a little on the

775 ground; he also pours what is left at the bottom of the gourd, so the
769 souls will rejoice with him. It is considered a great honor when a
[554] naba tells an elder to grasp one side of the gourd and to pour along with him.

775 One must not laugh about the souls of the deceased and their visits
761 to earth. If you doubt their return, listen to what an old naba once told me. "One day, I had gone to visit a naba, my friend and neighbor. We had arranged to meet at his house with another neighboring chief. He gave us a very nice welcome, and the day was most pleasant. We were resting at night in the shelter of his soukala when we were suddenly awakened by the sound of harness bells and horses galloping. On the following day we left our host. No sooner had we left than he took ill. A week later he died. The souls had come to fetch him. Oh! Father, do not laugh about the souls of the deceased!" And the good old man trembled with emotion. This is what our Mossi believe. They firmly believe in all these ghost stories.

775 Are the souls reincarnated? Small children who die before the age of reason are said to return in the person of the first child borne by their mother. This is why, especially if the mother has lost several
[304] children in a row, the baby is marked at birth with distinctive signs,
[766] particularly tattooings on the belly and lower back; sometimes, if he dies, a piece of his ear is cut off, or a toe or finger joint broken. It is said that the child born next will bear the same marks, but no living example of this could be cited. Often, the mother leaves the hut where her baby died. An old woman spreads ashes before the door in the evening, and if small footprints are found in the morning, it is a sign that the child came back and wishes to return to his mother's bosom.

Rebirth is not granted to anyone other than young children, not even to young unmarried people. They remain in the place of the souls for years on end, the number of which cannot be ascertained, and no distinction is made between the rich and the poor, the powerful and their subjects.

775 The soul of suicides, cursed in death, is not entitled as a rule to
762 funeral ceremonies. It wanders through the world without harming anyone, but unable to find rest.

577 Morality is reduced to its simplest expression. Whatever harms
673 other people is bad. Think your own intimate thoughts and desire anything you like; as long as you do no harm to your fellow man, no fault has been committed. Fornication and adultery are faults only

000 16. Circumcision.
17. Excision.
18. After the circumcision.
19. Emancipation and coming of age.
20. Guardianship.
21. Adoption.
22. Interdiction.

Let us begin with filiation.

848 Filiation. —"The Mossi," says Vadier, "distinguish three types of filiation: (1) legitimate filiation; (2) natural filiation; and (3) filiation from incest.

As for filiation from adultery, it is regarded exactly in the same manner as natural filiation.

[843] The period of gestation is believed to be from seven to twelve months. A child conceived outside this lapse of time is regarded as a natural child. Moreover, a woman need only tell her husband that the child she is carrying in her womb is not his and he will disown it.

When the illegitimate child or one born of adultery reaches the age of three or six (depending on its sex), it is entrusted to its natural father. In spite of this separation, the child retains its rights of inheritance from its mother.

848 Filiation from incest does not exist, or rather there is not enough
847 time for obligations and rights to be created. Indeed, according to a barbarous custom, the child born of incest is put to death immediately after birth by the women who assisted with the delivery.

835 Incest rules apply between kin of any degree in the ascending and descending lines: sister and brother, uncle and niece, nephew and aunt, and all their relatives in the direct ascending and descending lines; father-in-law and daughter-in-law; son-in-law and mother-in-law. /251/

684 When incest occurs, the guilty pair are driven from their families and from Yatenga, and the naba confiscates all their property."

843 Theory of birth. —The Mossi believe that when a woman is
715 pregnant, the soul of an ancestor has returned within her. We shall speak of this animistic explanation of birth later under "Religion" /not translated/.

In fact, resemblances between the child and some previously known ancestor are pointed out as often as possible, and it is said that this particular ancestor was reincarnated within the woman.

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776 considered the wife of a male deity called *Winnam*, *Windé*, or *Naba Zidiwindé*. The true nature of Winnam is not clear. The Mossi say: "Winnam is the sun, and Winnam is God"; he is considered a sun god as well as a supreme deity.
● [775] Winnam is venerated but he is not feared, because it is the dead ancestors who chastise evil-doers by affliction or death. When wicked people die they face the wrath of the ancestors in *Keemsétenga*, or land of the ancestors.

The Mossi have several concepts of the spiritual essence or animating prin-
774 ciple of man. First there is the *seega* (pl. *seesé*), an entity found in all living beings; it leaves the body during sleep, and its adventures provide the dreams of men. The seega can be captured during its nocturnal wanderings or in places
[761] where large crowds congregate. If the seega is captured and eaten by a sorcerer, its owner will die. A man's shadow is also called his seega; persons about to die have no shadows, since their seesé have either been stolen or have
[822] left on their own account.

Another principle called the *keema* (pl. *keemsé*) is associated with the dead
775 or with persons about to die. The keema of a dying man wanders around and often frightens people; as soon as he is dead, he is no longer referred to by name but is called the "keema." Keemsé is also the word used for the generalized
[769] ancestors who sanction the behavior of the living and who must be placated if people wish to have enough food, wives, children, and good health. A man's own keemsé take a vital interest in his affairs, in return for which they receive nourishment in the form of the seesé (animals do not have keemsé) of sacrificed animals.

[827] The breath, called *vousem*, is also considered an animating principle by the Mossi and, since it leaves the body through the nose at death, they believe that a man's nose is the first thing to die. It is not clear how the seega is disposed of when the body dies. Some people say it remains forever about the haunts of man; others believe that it goes to a mountain called Plimpikou and disappears into a cavern. Still others believe that the seega becomes the keema and goes to Plimpikou, from whence the keemsé come to visit their descendants. It is difficult to determine whether the Mossi have always been vague about their traditional religious concepts or whether this uncertainty is the result of the influx of such foreign creeds as Islam and Christianity.

175 The first recorded contact between the Mossi and Moslems took place around 1328 when the Yatenga Mossi attacked, burned, and sacked Timbuktu,
797 then held by the Dia dynasty of the Songhoi (Dubois 1896:251). For more than a century afterward, the Mossi pursued a turbulent and aggressive policy in the region of the Niger bend, pushing as far as Gourma, Walata, and Banku (ibid:127). They were finally defeated and routed by Sonni Ali in 1477. In 1499, when Askia the Great (El Hadj Mohammed ben Abou Bekr, usurper of the Songhoi throne from the Sonni dynasty in 1494) returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he launched a *jihad* or holy war on the Mossi who had rejected his ultimatum to adopt Islam. Askia defeated the Mossi, "devastated the towns and countryside, took men, women, and children as prisoners, and forcibly converted these captives to Islam" (Dubois 1896:127–128). The

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cestors. They did not remember how they were related unless they happened to have a common grandfather or great-grandfather who had held the nam. The differential value thus placed on genealogies by the noble and non-noble lineages was due in most cases to the differential access of these lineages to the strategic resources of Mossi society. People who held the nam and belonged to noble lineages enjoyed special claims to goods and services. Those whose lineages did not hold the nam had no such privileges.

Because Mossi society was basically patrilineal, a man shared in the status and the corporate assets of his patrilineage. Conversely, a man had no access to the status or resources of his mother's patrilineage except for some ritual rights and duties that accrued to him as a *yagenga* (a sister's or daughter's son). These rights and duties included residence in the home of a maternal patrilineage during childhood, attendance at sacrifices to the mother's patrilineal ancestors, the settling of quarrels between maternal kinsmen, and ritual license to seize specific items of property from these relatives. This license dramatized the *lack* of access rather than *freedom* of access to the property of maternal relatives.

When a man's maternal relatives controlled the nam of the territory in which he lived, he could improve his social and economic position. In many cases, a young man who had gone to live as a "stranger" with a noble uncle or grandfather remained with these relatives. His privilege to remain was sanctioned by the Mossi belief that a boy's maternal ancestors would wreak vengeance on any person who tried to evict him from the village from which his mother had been "sent into the bush" (given away as a wife). By using various strategies and subterfuges, the "stranger" obtained wives through his maternal relatives and used their land and other resources. After several generations the lineal descendants of the "stranger" frequently became indistinguishable from their maternal relatives, although such cases were not often formally acknowledged. Whether these "sisters' children" ever managed to obtain the nam of their mother's patrilineage is a moot point, because in theory they could not. Yet, also by Mossi definition, a man could never inherit rights and duties in his mother's patrilineage; however, it is known that this did happen. It is possible that the close check kept by the ruling lineage on its genealogy made usurpation impossible. Yet I know of several cases in which candidates for chiefship feared competition from men whose descent actually barred them from the nam.

The son of a nobleman and a commoner woman seldom attached himself permanently to his maternal patrilineage, although he retained all of his customary rights, privileges, and duties in it. Occasionally, noblemen did attach themselves to their maternal relatives, but those who did had

513 The Mogho Naba slept in a grass hut in the palace
643 compound. Two

643 reasons are given for the choice of a grass hut over a brick building: first,
[342] the grass hut was considered better protection against sorcerers, who were
[754] believed to induce storms that destroy buildings and their occupants; sec-
[775] ond, it was believed that the ruler's ancestors preferred to visit grass huts
because it was easier for them to enter through the interstices in the walls.
[644] When the monarch retired for the night, one of his pages stood guard at the door. The Mogho Naba usually slept all night, but he occasionally made the rounds with a page to check on the palace guards or the safety (and virtue) of his wives.

643 The routine of the Mogho Naba seldom varied. Only in times of danger
[644] or on great ceremonial occasions did protocol permit any major changes in court procedure. Normally, pages, ministers, and other court officials adhered very strictly to their traditional tasks.

The Mossi considered the king's office to be such a difficult one that even today they say, *Mogho Naba toumde ya yida fa* ("The Mogho Naba's task is the most difficult of all"). Nevertheless, the Mogho Naba's office was always eagerly sought, and considerable care had to be exercised to
[645] ensure that the right person was chosen. As soon as the incumbent Mogho Naba died, and even before he was buried, the Ouidi Naba, as prime minister, began the consultations leading to the selection of a new monarch. Mossi custom decreed that the eldest son of a previous ruler be chosen as the new Mogho Naba. This choice was not automatic, however, in view of the primary consideration that the person selected should have the skill to "keep" the country. Other qualifications for office were membership in the royal minimal lineage, soundness of body and mind, and sufficient age to command universal respect. Given these requirements and the lack of any provisions for a regency, it is not surprising that a dead ruler's sons, brothers, uncles, and even grandchildren—that is, his entire babissi—should have competed to "eat the nam" (accede to power).[12] Of the thirty-four kings who have ruled since Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, twelve succeeded their brothers and twenty-two their fathers. Interestingly enough, there is some indication that at the beginning of the Ouagadougou dynasty, the successor of a king was usually chosen from among his brothers before the nam was passed on to the next generation.[13] For example, Oubri's four sons all reigned in turn before the kingship descended to the son of the last brother in office. Then, two of this brother's sons reigned before the nam descended to a new generation. Initially, then, seniority within the royal lineage, like seniority within the local ruling lineages, may have been determined by generation. On the other hand, accidental factors may have governed: a weak state organization may have